REMARKS

I.   Summary of Office Action

Claims 1-54 are now pending in the application.

The Examiner objected to various claims as being misnumbered, and renumbered these claims according to their proper numberings.

Claims 27-54 were rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as being directed to non-statutory subject matter.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-3, 6-11, 14-25, 27-33, 35-42, and 45-52 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as being anticipated by Oliver et al. U.S. Patent No. 6,845,374 (hereinafter, "Oliver").

The Examiner rejected claims 12-13 and 43-44 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Oliver in view of Shtivelman U.S. Patent No. 6,346,952 (hereinafter, "Shtivelman").

Claims 4-5, 26, 34, and 53-54 were objected to by the Examiner as being dependent upon a rejected base claim.

II.   Summary of Applicants' Reply

Applicants gratefully acknowledge recognition by the Examiner that claims 4-5, 26, 34, and 53-54 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants have amended claims 19-20, 23-26, 28-30, and 32-54 in order to update their dependencies based on the renumbering of claims by the Examiner. No new matter has been added by these amendments to the claims.

Claims 27 and 31 have been amended by applicants in response to the Examiner's rejection of claims 27-54 under 35 U.S.C. § 101.

Claim 27 has also been amended by applicants in order to correct recently discovered typographical errors. In particular, claim 27 has been amended to insert the word "and" prior to the final element of this claim, and to change "value" to "values" in the final element of this claim.

The Examiner's rejections of the claims are respectfully traversed.

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

III. The Renumbering of the Claims and the Resulting Claim Amendments

As indicated by the Examiner on page 2 of the Office Action, applicants claims as originally filed included misnumbered claims. In particular, in the originally filed claims, two claims were mistakenly numbered "17," two claims were mistakenly numbered "21," and claim number "47" was mistakenly skipped. The claims were renumbered by the Examiner to correct these mistakes, such that originally numbered claims 1-53 are now claims 1-54.

In response to the renumbering of the claims by the Examiner, applicants have amended claims 19-20, 23-26, 28-30, and 32-54 in order to update their dependencies. The amendments to these claims do not add any new matter and do not affect the scope of these claims.

IV. The Rejection of Claims 27-54 Under 35 U.S.C. § 101

The Examiner rejected claims 27-54 under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as being directed to non-statutory subject matter.

In order to address the Examiner's concern regarding claims 27-54, applicants have amended independent claims 27 and 31 to specify that the "requester system" and the "plurality of producer modules" recited therein are respectively "executing on one or more processing units." Thus, applicants respectfully submit that amended claims 27 and 31 (and claims 28-30 and 32-54 which depend therefrom) fall within the technological arts safe harbor of MPEP § 2106. Moreover, the amendments to claims 27 and 31 do not add any new matter, given that the use of computer systems and processing units in connection with the present invention is described in page 8, line 3 through page 9, line 22 (and corresponding FIG. 2) of the originally filed specification.

In light of the amendments to claims 27 and 31, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejection of these claims, and claims 28-30 and 32-53 which depend therefrom, under 35 U.S.C. § 101.

V.   The Rejection of Independent Claims 1, 22, 27, and 31 Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a)

The Examiner rejected each of pending independent claims 1, 22, 27, and 31 under

35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as being unpatentable over Oliver. The Examiner's rejection of these claims

under this section is respectfully traversed.

Applicants respectfully submit that, contrary to the Examiner's contention, each of

independent claims 1, 22, 27, and 31 is allowable for at least the reasons set forth below.

A. Independent Claim 1 is Allowable Over Oliver

Applicants' independent claim 1 relates to a recommendation system for delivering a list

of recommendations to a requester system over a computer network. As defined by independent

claim 1, this system includes:

> a plurality of producer modules in communication with the requester system, each
> of the plurality of producer modules receiving a request for recommendations
> from the requester system and producing a list of initial recommendations in
> response thereto, each of the recommendations in a list of initial recommendations
> including a confidence level and a producer identifier; and
> a recommendation engine comprising:
>
>> a weighting module modifying each of the confidence levels in a given list
>> of initial recommendations based on a weighting value associated with the
>> producer module that produced the given list of initial recommendations;
>>
>> a recommendation module selecting one or more of the recommendations
>> from the lists of initial recommendations based on the confidence levels of
>> the recommendations to produce a list of survived recommendations that
>> are transmitted to the recommender system; and
>>
>> an adjustment module adjusting the weighting values associated with each
>> of the producer modules based on information from the requester system
>> related to the list of survived recommendations transmitted to the requester
>> system.

Oliver, on the other hand, discusses methods and systems for adaptively selecting

relevant documents (or other forms of media) to be presented to a requester based on extracted

keywords from related documents. (*See, e.g.*, Oliver, column 2, line 16 through column 3,

line 11.) More particularly, as explained in column 4, lines 5-60, in Oliver, an assembly module

assembles documents from multiple sources (e.g., the Internet or a private network database) that

are considered to be of interest to the requestor, after which a pre-processing module removes

words that are "common" or otherwise "non-significant." A clustering module then groups

similar documents into clusters, and a filtration module assembles all "elligible" documents

(using application parameters). Finally, a recommendation module ranks eligible documents based on respective relevance scores and other criteria to obtain recommendations, and a presentation module personalizes the recommendations (e.g., by applying special sorting or additional filtration and converting the recommendations to the desired medium).

Applicants respectfully submit that, contrary to the Examiner's contention, Oliver does not show or suggest the system defined by independent claim 1 for at least the reasons set forth below.

(i)   Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest a Plurality of Producer Modules As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 1 requires "a plurality of producer modules ... each ... producing a list of initial recommendations ... [where] each of the recommendations in a list of initial recommendations include[es] a confidence level and a producer identifier" (claim 1). Contrary to the Examiner's suggestion on page 4 of the Office Action, for at least the following reasons, neither FIG. 1A nor column 4, lines 5-21 of Oliver (nor any other portion) shows or suggests "a plurality of producer modules" that produce such initial recommendation lists whose recommendations each include "a confidence level and a producer identifier."

First, the portion of Oliver referred to by the Examiner describes the use of a single assembly module 10. Even assuming arguendo that Oliver's assembly module 10 is the same as a producer module as claimed, although applicants submit that it is not, Oliver neither shows nor suggests the use of a plurality of assembly modules 10. Rather, as briefly explained above, in Oliver, a single module 10 is used to assemble documents that are considered to be of interest to the requestor and that are to be examined for relevance. Moreover, there would be no reason in Oliver to use multiple assembly modules 10, given that Oliver does not disclose any basis for discriminating among different documents depending on the assembly module 10 that obtained the document (i.e., all documents are examined and judged in the same manner, based on their respective content, regardless of the assembly module 10 that is being used).

Second, none of the documents assembled by Oliver's assembly module 10 include either a "confidence level" or a "producer identifier," as required by claim 1. The lack of an assembly module identifier in Oliver makes sense given that there is only one assembly module 10 being used, and as such, there is no need for it to be identified. Moreover, as explained throughout

Oliver, it is the content of the documents assembled by an assembly module 10 that determines their relevance and whether or not they are ultimately presented, not any characteristic of the assembly module being used. Thus, Oliver also fails to show or suggest that the documents assembled by an assembly module 10 include a "confidence level," which, as required by claim 1, is modified "based on a weighting value associated with the producer module that produced the given list" and is used as a basis for "selecting one or more of the recommendations."

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver fails to show or suggest a recommendation system including, among other things, "a plurality of producer modules ... each ... producing a list of initial recommendations ... [where] each of the recommendations in a list of initial recommendations include[es] a confidence level and a producer identifier" (claim 1).

(ii)   Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest a Weighting Module As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 1 requires "a weighting module modifying each of the confidence levels in a given list of initial recommendations based on a weighting value associated with the producer module that produced the given list of initial recommendations" (claim 1, emphasis added). Contrary to the Examiner's suggestion on page 4 of the Office Action, for at least the following reasons, Oliver does not show or suggest this element of applicants' claimed invention.

As explained above, only a single assembly module 10 (which the Examiner has equated with applicants' claimed producer module) is used in Oliver, and it is the content of the documents assembled by the single assembly module 10 (not any characteristic of the assembly module 10) that determines their relevance and whether or not they are ultimately presented. Thus, Oliver fails to show or suggest the use of a weighting module that modifies confidence levels of recommendations (which "confidence levels" do not even exist in Oliver) based on "a weighting value associated with the producer module that produced the given list of initial recommendations." In fact, because there is only a single assembly module 10 being used in Oliver (as opposed to the plurality of producer modules in applicants' claimed invention), the use of a "weighting value" would provide no use or benefit whatsoever, as all documents selected by the single assembly module 10 being used would be equally affected by any such "weighting value."

In arguing that the "weighting module" element of claim 1 is shown, the Examiner cited column 4, lines 32-36 of Oliver. (Office Action, page 4.) However, this portion of Oliver merely describes the use of a pre-processing module that "isolates the words in the interest set and removes words that are not useful for distinguishing one document from another," such as "common words" and "non-significant words." As is clear from the cited portion of Oliver, and contrary to the claimed invention, the removal of certain words from various documents is based on the characteristics of the actual words inside the assembled documents, and is not related in any manner to a characteristic (e.g., "weighting value") of the assembly module 10. The "weighting module" element of claim 1, on the other hand, requires confidence levels in a given list of initial recommendations to be modified based on a weighting value associated with the producer module that produced the list.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver fails to show or suggest a recommendation system including, among other things, "a weighting module modifying each of the confidence levels in a given list of initial recommendations based on a weighting value associated with the producer module that produced the given list of initial recommendations" (claim 1).

(iii) Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest a Recommendation Module As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 1 requires "a recommendation module selecting one or more of the recommendations from the lists of initial recommendations based on the confidence levels of the recommendations to produce a list of survived recommendations that are transmitted to the recommender system."

In contrast to applicants' claimed invention, Oliver does not show or suggest using any type of module to select one or more recommendations from the lists of initial recommendations "based on confidence levels." In particular, because Oliver fails to show or suggest any use of "confidence levels" (which are modified based on respective weighting values of the producer modules), Oliver must also fail to show or suggest selecting one or more recommendations based on such "confidence levels" as required by claim 1.

In arguing that the "recommendation module" element of claim 1 is shown, the Examiner cited column 4, lines 37-47 of Oliver. (Office Action, page 4.) However, this portion of Oliver merely describes the use of a filtration module 60 that determines which documents are

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"elligible" for recommendation based on application parameters such as the "age of documents and or client data that specify inclusion or exclusion of certain documents." Nowhere in Oliver is it shown or suggested that a "confidence level" that is modified based on a "weighting value"(or any other characteristic) associated with an assembly module 10 may be used, as required by claim 1.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver fails to show or suggest a recommendation system including, among other things, "a recommendation module selecting one or more of the recommendations from the lists of initial recommendations based on the confidence levels of the recommendations to produce a list of survived recommendations that are transmitted to the recommender system" (claim 1).

(iv)   Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest an Adjustment Module As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 1 requires "an adjustment module adjusting the weighting values associated with each of the producer modules based on information from the requester system related to the list of survived recommendations transmitted to the requester system." Contrary to the Examiner's suggestion on page 4 of the Office Action, for at least the following reasons, Oliver does not show or suggest this element of the claimed invention.

First, as explained above, Oliver does not show or suggest a plurality of assembly modules 10 (which the Examiner has equated with applicants' claimed producer modules). Moreover, even if Oliver did show a plurality of assembly modules 10, although it does not, and even if Oliver's assembly module 10 was the same as applicants' claimed producer module, which it is not, as explained above, Oliver nonetheless fails to show or suggest the use of "weighting values associated with each of the producer modules" (claim 1). Thus, Oliver must also fail to show or suggest an adjustment module as required by claim 1 that "adjust[s] the weighting values associated with each of the producer modules based" (emphasis added).

Second, even if Oliver did show or suggest an adjustment module that adjusts weighting values associated with assembly modules, although for at least the reasons provided above it does not, Oliver nonetheless fails to show or suggest adjusting weighting values "based on information from the requester system related to the list of survived recommendations transmitted to the requester system" (claim 1). In fact, Oliver does not show or suggest receiving

or using information from a requester relating to survived recommendations (i.e., feedback) for any purpose whatsoever, much less for adjusting weighting values.

In arguing that the "adjustment module" element of claim 1 is shown, the Examiner cited column 4, lines 53-60 of Oliver. (Office Action, page 4.) However, this portion of Oliver does not shows or suggest applicants' claimed "adjustment module." For example, Oliver's presentation module 90 is not a requestor that may provide information based on which weighting values may be adjusted (rather, it is providing an output to the requestor). Moreover, the personalization of recommendations by presentation module 90 (e.g., by applying special sorting or additional filtration and converting the recommendations to the desired medium) described in the cited portion of Oliver does not relate to the adjustment of weighting values, and is not based on information relating to survived recommendations.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver fails to show or suggest a recommendation system including, among other things, "an adjustment module adjusting the weighting values associated with each of the producer modules based on information from the requester system related to the list of survived recommendations transmitted to the requester system" (claim 1).

In light of the above, applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 1 is allowable over Oliver. Because independent claim 1 is allowable Oliver, claims 2-21 which depend therefrom are also allowable over this reference. Therefore, applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 1, and claims 2-21 which depend from claim 1, be withdrawn by the Examiner.

B. Independent Claim 22 is Allowable Over Oliver

Applicants' independent claim 22 relates to a relevant object determination system for delivering relevant objects over a computer network to a requester system having one or more users in contact therewith. As defined by independent claim 22, this system includes:

> a first producer module and a second producer module, each of the first and second producer modules receiving a request for relevant recommendations from the requester system, the first producer module producing a first list of recommendations in response to the request for relevant recommendations and the second producer module producing a second list of recommendations in response to the request for relevant recommendations, each recommendation including an object identifier, a confidence level, and a producer identifier; and

a recommendation engine comprising:

> a weighting module modifying the confidence level in each recommendation in the first list of recommendations based on a first weighting value and modifying the confidence level in each recommendation in the second list of recommendations based on a second weighting value;

> a recommendation module, selecting a predetermined number of the recommendations, the recommendation module delivering to the requester system objects identified by the object identifiers in the predetermined number of recommendations and the producer identifiers in the predetermined number of recommendations; and

> an adjustment module adjusting the first weighting value and the second weighting value based on inputs from the requester system indicative of reactions of the one or more users to objects sent from the recommendation module to the requester system.

Applicants respectfully submit that, contrary to the Examiner's contention, Oliver does not show or suggest the system defined by independent claim 22 for at least the reasons set forth below.

(i)   Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest a First and Second Producer Module As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 22 requires "a <u>first</u> producer module <u>and</u> a <u>second</u> producer module ... the first producer module producing a first list of recommendations ... and the second producer module producing a second list of recommendations ... each recommendation including an object identifier, a <u>confidence level</u>, and a <u>producer identifier</u>" (emphasis added). Contrary to the Examiner's assertion on page 9 of the Office Action, for at least the same reasons advanced above in section V(A)(i) in connection with the rejection of independent claim 1 (in particular, with respect to the use of a plurality of producer modules, confidence levels, and producer identifiers as required by claim 1), applicants respectfully submit that Oliver does not show or suggest this element of independent claim 22.

(ii)   Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest a Weighting Module As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 22 requires "a <u>weighting module</u> modifying the <u>confidence level</u> in each recommendation in the first list of recommendations based on a first <u>weighting value</u> and modifying the confidence level in each

recommendation in the second list of recommendations based on a second <u>weighting value</u>" (emphasis added). Contrary to the Examiner's assertion on pages 9-10 of the Office Action, for at least the same reasons advanced above in section V(A)(ii) in connection with the rejection of independent claim 1, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver does not show or suggest this element of independent claim 22.

(iii) Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest a Recommendation Module As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 22 requires "a recommendation module, selecting a predetermined number of the recommendations, the recommendation module delivering to the requester system objects identified by the object identifiers in the predetermined number of recommendations and the producer identifiers in the predetermined number of recommendations."

In contrast to applicants' claimed invention, Oliver does not show or suggest the use of more than one producer module (or even more than one assembly module 10), as explained above in section V(A)(i) with respect to claim 1, much less producer identifiers. Thus, Oliver must also fail to show or suggest a "recommendation module" that delivers a predetermined number of objects and that delivers "the producer identifiers in the predetermined number of recommendations" (claim 22).

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver fails to show or suggest a recommendation system including, among other things, "a recommendation module" as required by claim 22.

(iv) Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest an Adjustment Module As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 22 requires "an adjustment module adjusting the first weighting value and the second weighting value based on inputs from the requester system indicative of reactions of the one or more users to objects sent from the recommendation module to the requester system."

In contrast to applicants' claimed invention, Oliver does not show or suggest any use of "weighting values" (as explained above in section V(A)(ii) with respect to claim 1), much less updating such values based on inputs from a requestor. Moreover, as Oliver does not mention

any type of "reactions of the one or more users" that have received objects, Oliver must also fail to show or suggest adjusting "weighting values" based on such reactions.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver fails to show or suggest a recommendation system including, among other things, "an adjustment module" as required by claim 22.

In light of the above, applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 22 is allowable over Oliver. Because independent claim 22 is allowable Oliver, claims 23-26 which depend therefrom are also allowable over this reference. Therefore, applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 22, and claims 23-26 which depend from claim 22, be withdrawn by the Examiner.

C. Independent Claim 27 is Allowable Over Oliver

Applicants' independent claim 27 relates to a method of adaptively weighing producer modules in a recommendation system employing a plurality of producer modules, where each producer module has an associated weighting value. As defined by independent claim 27, this method includes:

> receiving one or more recommendations from each of the plurality of producer modules, each of the received recommendation including a producer identifier indicating which producer module produced the received recommendation;

> transmitting a plurality of survived recommendations to a the requester system, each of the survived recommendations being selected from the received recommendations;

> receiving information from the requester system related to the plurality of survived recommendations transmitted to the requester system; and

> modifying each of the weighting values based on the information received from the requester system.

Applicants respectfully submit that, contrary to the Examiner's contention, Oliver does not show or suggest the method defined by independent claim 27 for at least the reasons set forth below.

(i)   Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest Receiving One or More Recommendations As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 27 requires "receiving one or more recommendations from each of the <u>plurality of producer modules</u>, each of the received recommendation including a <u>producer identifier</u> indicating which producer module produced the received recommendation" (emphasis added). Contrary to the Examiner's assertion on pages 11-12 of the Office Action, for at least the same reasons advanced above in section V(A)(i) in connection with the rejection of independent claim 1 (in particular, with respect to the use of a plurality of producer modules and producer identifiers as required by claim 1), applicants respectfully submit that Oliver does not show or suggest this element of independent claim 27.

Moreover, applicants respectfully submit that the additional portion of Oliver cited by the Examiner on page 12 of the Office Action (i.e., column 4, line 61 through column 5, line 3 of Oliver) does not provide support for the Examiner's assertion that this element of the claimed invention is disclosed by Oliver. Rather, this portion of Oliver (and corresponding FIG. 3) merely discloses the steps of a flow chart that correspond to the various modules described in column 4 of Oliver (which modules have been addressed above with respect to the Examiner's reliance thereon in rejecting the claims). In particular, in the portion cited by the Examiner, Oliver discloses the assembly, pre-processing, and grouping of documents into clusters, as well as the extraction of keywords in the documents, filtration of the documents, construction of a recommendation set of documents, and presentation of the recommendations. None of the steps associated with the flow chart described in the cited portion of Oliver, however, relate to the use of a plurality of producer modules or the use of producer identifiers.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver fails to show or suggest "receiving one or more recommendations from each of the plurality of producer modules, each of the received recommendation including a producer identifier indicating which producer module produced the received recommendation," as required by claim 27.

(ii)   Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest Receiving Information From the Requester As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 27 requires "receiving information <u>from the requester system</u> related to the plurality of survived recommendations transmitted to the requester system" (emphasis added). Contrary to the Examiner's assertion on

page 12 of the Office Action, for at least the same reasons advanced above in section V(A)(iv) in connection with the rejection of independent claim 1, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver does not show or suggest this element of independent claim 27.

Moreover, applicants respectfully submit that the additional portion of Oliver cited by the Examiner on page 12 of the Office Action (i.e., column 1, lines 51-55) does not provide support for the Examiner's assertion that this element of the claimed invention is disclosed by Oliver. Rather, this portion of Oliver merely discloses that, in certain collaborative filtering systems, documents viewed by similar users (based on user profiles) may be recommended to a user. However, this is not the same as receiving information by a requestor about recommendations that have been transmitted to it (i.e., feedback). On the contrary, the whole purpose of the disclosed collaboration is to determine whether a document should be sent to a user in the first place.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver fails to show or suggest "receiving information from the requester system related to the plurality of survived recommendations transmitted to the requester system," as required by claim 27.

(iii) Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest Modifying a Recommendation Module As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 27 requires "modifying each of the <u>weighting values</u> based on the information received from the requester system" (emphasis added). Contrary to the Examiner's assertion on page 12 of the Office Action, for at least the same reasons advanced above in section V(A)(ii) in connection with the rejection of independent claim 1, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver does not show or suggest the use a plurality of producer modules or respective "weighting values," and thus does not show or suggest this element of independent claim 27.

Moreover, applicants respectfully submit that the additional portion of Oliver cited by the Examiner on page 12 of the Office Action (i.e., FIG. 7) does not provide support for the Examiner's assertion that this element of the claimed invention is disclosed by Oliver. Rather, this figure of Oliver (which is described at column 5, line 48 through column 6, line 14) merely explains the grouping of documents into clusters. However, the grouping of documents into clusters has nothing to do with modifying "weighting values" of a plurality of producer modules (which plurality of producer modules is not even shown or suggested in Oliver).

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver fails to show or suggest "modifying each of the weighting values based on the information received from the requester system," as required by claim 27.

In light of the above, applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 27 is allowable over Oliver. Because independent claim 27 is allowable Oliver, claims 28-30 which depend therefrom are also allowable over this reference. Therefore, applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 27, and claims 28-30 which depend from claim 27, be withdrawn by the Examiner.

D. Independent Claim 31 is Allowable Over Oliver

Applicants' independent claim 31 relates to a method of producing a list of recommendations using a plurality of producer modules, where each producer module has an associated weighting value. As defined by independent claim 31, this method includes:

> receiving a request for recommendations from a the requester system;
>
> transmitting the request to a plurality of producer modules;
>
> receiving a list of initial recommendations from each of the producer modules, every recommendation in a list of initial recommendations having a confidence level and a producer identifier;
>
> modifying each of the confidence levels in each of the lists of initial recommendations based on the weighting value associated with the producer module that produced the list of initial recommendations to produce a list of modified recommendations;
>
> selecting a predetermined number of survived recommendations from the list of modified recommendations;
>
> transmitting the predetermined number of survived recommendations to the requester system;
>
> receiving feedback information from the requester system related to the predetermined number of survived recommendations transmitted to the requester system; and
>
> modifying each of the weighting values based on the feedback information received from the requester system.

Applicants respectfully submit that, contrary to the Examiner's contention, Oliver does

not show or suggest the method defined by independent claim 31 for at least the reasons set forth

below.

(i)   Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest Transmitting the Request As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 31 requires "transmitting the

request to a <u>plurality</u> of producer modules" (emphasis added). Contrary to the Examiner's

assertion on page 13 of the Office Action, and as explained above in section V(A)(i) with respect

to claim 1, nowhere in Oliver (including FIG. 12 cited by the Examiner) is it shown or suggested

that more than one producer modules (or even more than one assembly modules 10) may be used

in any manner. Therefore, Oliver also fails to show or suggest transmitting a request for

recommendations to a "plurality of producer modules," as required by claim 31.

(ii)   Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest Receiving a List of Initial Recommendations As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 31 requires "receiving a list

of initial recommendations from each of the producer modules, every recommendation in a list

of initial recommendations having a <u>confidence level</u> and a <u>producer identifier</u>" (emphasis

added). Contrary to the Examiner's assertion on page 13 of the Office Action, for at least the

same reasons advanced above in section V(A)(i) in connection with the rejection of independent

claim 1, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver does not show or suggest this element of

independent claim 22. In particular, applicants respectfully submit that, as explained above,

nowhere in Oliver (including column 4, line 61 through column 5, line 3 of Oliver cited by the

Examiner) is it shown or suggested that "confidence levels" or "producer identifiers" be used.

(iii)   Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest Modifying Each of the Confidence Levels As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 31 requires "modifying each

of the <u>confidence levels</u> in each of the lists of initial recommendations based on the <u>weighting</u>

<u>value</u> associated with the producer module that produced the list of initial recommendations to

produce a list of modified recommendations" (emphasis added). Contrary to the Examiner's

assertion on page 13 of the Office Action, for at least the same reasons advanced above in

section V(A)(ii) in connection with the rejection of independent claim 1, applicants respectfully

submit that nowhere in Oliver (including FIG. 7 cited by the Examiner) is it shown or suggested that a plurality of "confidence levels" or "weighting values" be used, as required by this element of claim 31.

(iv)   Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest Receiving Feedback Information Levels As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 31 requires "receiving feedback information <u>from the requester system</u> related to the predetermined number of survived recommendations transmitted to the requester system" (emphasis added). Contrary to the Examiner's assertion on page 14 of the Office Action, for at least the same reasons advanced above in section V(A)(iv) in connection with the rejection of independent claim 1, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver does not show or suggest this element of independent claim 31.

Moreover, as explained above, column 1, lines 51-55 of Oliver, which was cited by the Examiner on page 14 of the Office Action, does not provide support for the Examiner's assertion that this element of the claimed invention is disclosed by Oliver. Rather, this portion of Oliver merely discloses that, in certain collaborative filtering systems, documents viewed by similar users (based on user profiles) may be recommended to a user. However, this is not the same as receiving information by a requestor about recommendations that have been transmitted to it (i.e., feedback). On the contrary, the whole purpose of the disclosed collaboration is to determine whether a document should be sent to a user in the first place.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver fails to show or suggest "receiving information from the requester system related to the plurality of survived recommendations transmitted to the requester system," as required by claim 31.

(v)   Oliver Does Not Show or Suggest Modifying Each of the Weighting Values As Claimed By Applicants

As recited above, the invention defined by applicants' claim 31 requires "modifying each of the <u>weighting values</u> based on the feedback information received from the requester system" (emphasis added). Contrary to the Examiner's assertion on page 14 of the Office Action, for at least the same reasons advanced above in section V(A)(ii) in connection with the rejection of independent claim 1, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver does not show or suggest the use a plurality of producer modules or respective "weighting values," and thus does not show or suggest this element of independent claim 31.

Moreover, as explained above in connection with claim 27, FIG. 7 of Oliver does not provide support for the Examiner's assertion that this element of the claimed invention is disclosed by Oliver. Rather, this figure of Oliver (which is described at column 5, line 48 through column 6, line 14) merely explains the grouping of documents into clusters. However, the grouping of documents into clusters has nothing to do with modifying "weighting values" of a plurality of producer modules (which plurality of producer modules is not even shown or suggested in Oliver).

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that Oliver fails to show or suggest "modifying each of the weighting values based on the information received from the requester system," as required by claim 31.

In light of the above, applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 31 is allowable over Oliver. Because independent claim 31 is allowable Oliver, claims 32-54 which depend therefrom are also allowable over this reference. Therefore, applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 31, and claims 32-54-30 which depend from claim 32, be withdrawn by the Examiner.

VI.   The Rejection of Dependent Claims 2-3, 6-21, 23-25, 28-30, 32-33, and 35-52 Under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(a) and 103(a)

The Examiner rejected each of dependent claims 2-3, 6-21, 23-25, 28-30, 32-33, and 35-52 under one of 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(a) and 103(a) as being either anticipated by Oliver or unpatentable over Oliver in view of Shtivelman. Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's rejection.

Applicants respectfully submit that claims 2-3, 6-21, 23-25, 28-30, 32-33, and 35-52, each of which depends from one of independent claims 1, 22, 27, and 31, are allowable for at least the same reasons that the independent claims are patentable as set forth above. Therefore, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejections of claims 2-3, 6-21, 23-25, 28-30, 32-33, and 35-52.

VII.   Petition For Extension Of Time

Applicants have submitted herewith a petition for a three-month extension of time for responding to the Office Action mailed on February 10, 2005. The Director is hereby authorized

to charge any additional fees which may be required for this response, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 08-0219.

VIII. Conclusion

Applicants respectfully submit that, as described above, the cited prior art does not show or suggest the combination of features recited in the claims. Applicants do not concede that the cited prior art shows any of the elements recited in the claims. However, applicants have provided specific examples of elements in the claims that are clearly not present in the cited prior art.

Applicants strongly emphasize that one reviewing the prosecution history should not interpret any of the examples applicants have described herein in connection with distinguishing over the prior art as limiting to those specific features in isolation. Rather, applicants assert that it is the combination of elements recited in each of the claims, when each claim is interpreted as a whole, which is patentable. Applicants have emphasized certain features in the claims as clearly not present in the cited references, as discussed above. However, applicants do not concede that other features in the claims are found in the prior art. Rather, for the sake of simplicity, applicants have provided examples of why the claims described above are distinguishable over the cited prior art.

Further, applicants hereby retract any arguments and/or statements made during prosecution that were rejected by the Examiner during prosecution and/or that were unnecessary to obtain allowance, and only maintain the arguments that persuaded the Examiner with respect to the allowability of the patent claims, as one of ordinary skill would understand from a review of the prosecution history. That is, applicants specifically retract statements that one of ordinary skill would recognize from reading the file history were not necessary, not used and/or were rejected by the Examiner in allowing the patent application.
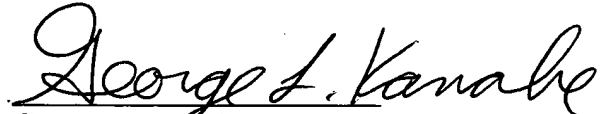
For all the reasons advanced above, applicants respectfully submit that the rejections

have been overcome and should be withdrawn.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: <u>August 10, 2005</u>

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